

Bowhies Lake

VF NAC 5340 830 Kit



# KITIMAT

*Meldrum, Pixie*

THE  
FIRST  
FIVE  
YEARS

KITIMAT ARM



APR 10 1959  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
The Library of the  
Graduate School of Design

*Gift of R. P. Squires*

# The Corporation of the District of Kitimat

1958

## COUNCIL

Reeve P. W. Hallman

Councillor R. Ferrie

Councillor E. D. Forward

Councillor R. A. Freeman

Councillor M. E. Gooding

Councillor R. C. Hatch

Councillor J. Q. Springer

## STAFF

C. McC. Henderson, Manager

Mrs. J. McElroy, Clerk

J. A. Currie, Comptroller

P. C. Read, Assessor

E. T. Ames, Director of Planning

N. L. Barber, Director of Public Works

A. A. Creed, Fire Chief

R. K. Jensen, Building Inspector

R. M. Block, Director of Recreation

Royal Canadian Mounted Police

# FOREWORD

by

Reeve P. W. Hallman

## TO THE PEOPLE OF KITIMAT

The Council is pleased to present to you this brief panorama of your municipality's progress to date.

The first five years have been exciting ones. They have been years of rapid growth and development, during which Kitimat has emerged from ideas and vision into a living reality.

The skills and energies of men and women from many lands and walks of life have made Kitimat what it is today. We can be justly proud of the results.

The full development of Northern British Columbia is just beginning. Kitimat is young and vigorous, well prepared to assume a leading role in this "Awakening of the North".

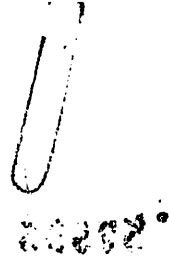
P. W. Hallman, Reeve.

December, 1958.





1951



# KITIMAT

## The First Five Years

Text

by

Pixie Meldrum

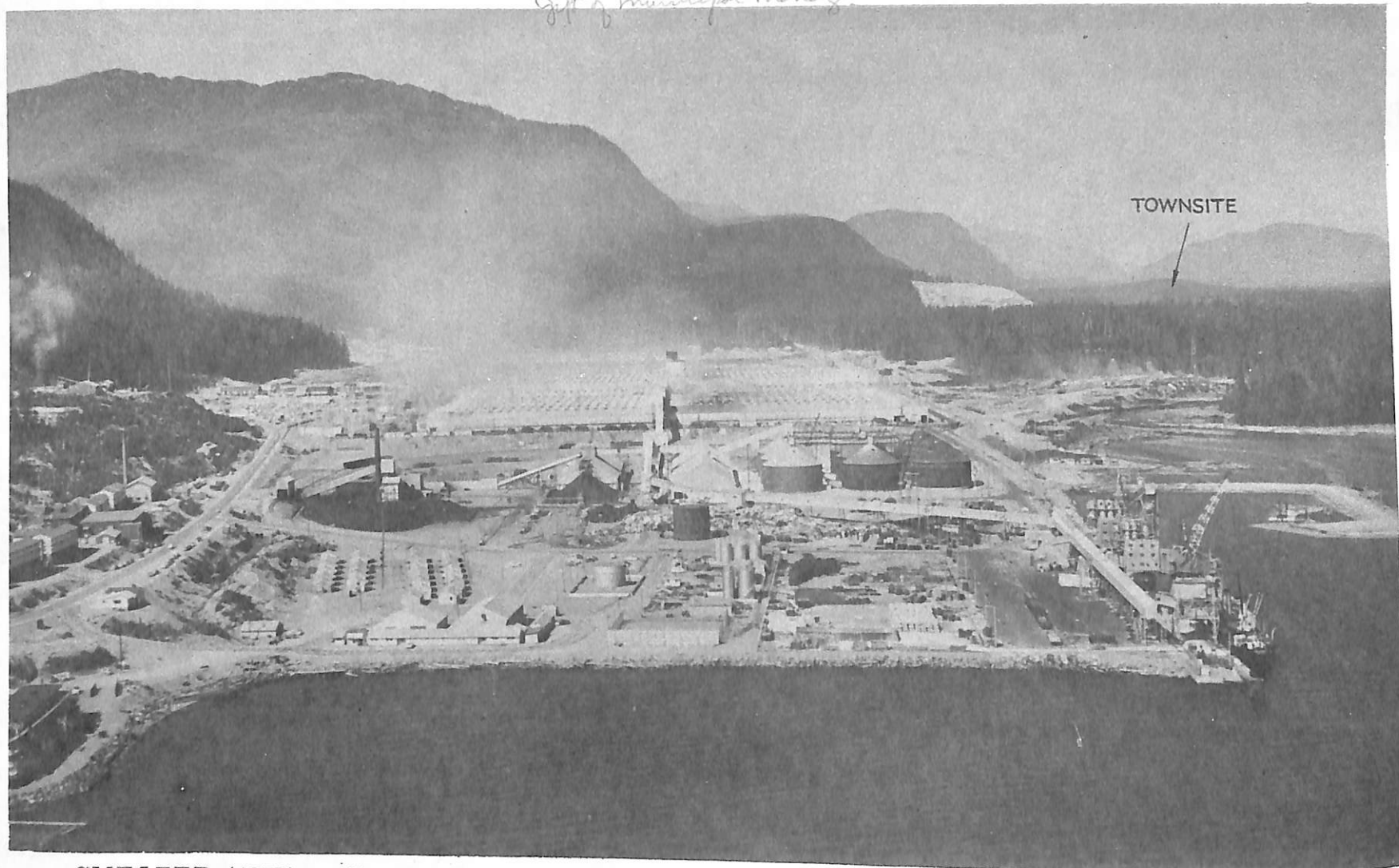


Apr 13, 1957  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
The Library of the  
Graduate School of Design

57995

Gift of Municipal Manager

# THE REASON WHY



SMELTER (1957) — Looking north, showing deep water and docking facilities. Townsite clearing just visible (upper right).

VF  
WAC  
5340g30  
Kit

Kit - Canada Kit BC  
Kit - B.C. Corporation of the Dist

This year, above the main doorway of Kitimat's public safety building, there is a large aluminum 5, in honor of the town's fifth birthday.

On the flagpole beside the building, whipping in the breeze off the Douglas Channel, is the blue flag of BC's Centennial year.

The two are symbols, setting Kitimat in space and time.

Both mark milestones in the life of one of Canada's youngest and most publicized communities.

The big aluminum number suggests an important stage in Kitimat's development.

It calls for a look backward, — a balancing of assets and liabilities, — a summary of what has happened since April, 1953.

It also implies for Kitimat a past, — not a long pageant of events such as those suggested by

the blue flag, — but an explosive infancy, safely weathered and worthy of review.

And it poses a few questions.

\* \* \* \*

Perhaps the first is, — why Kitimat?

Today a town of more than 10,000 people is putting down its roots in an isolated valley 400 miles north of Vancouver on the BC coast.

Why?

The answer is a late chapter in the history of the Province, — the development of vast, untouched sources of hydro-electric power for an aluminum industry, new to the Pacific northwest.

It is the story of industry's search for power in the mountains of the coastal range of British Columbia, — of how the Provincial Government directed the Aluminum Company of Canada to the waterways in the vicinity of Tweedsmuir Park, an

area offering three essentials for the project, — huge power potential, deep sea docking facilities and a wide valley as the site of a future city.

The northern tip of the Kitimat Arm of Douglas Channel provided two of these requirements. Kemano had the other. So the project was born, and with it, the first ideas about the town.

\* \* \* \*

How did it start?

As Kitimat was to be the home of people employed in the smelting of aluminum, the Company realized from the beginning the town must attract and hold industrial workers. This was recognized as an essential factor in the economic success of the enterprise.

Also from the first, Kitimat was to be a public town, run by an elected council in the normal manner. To ensure that there would never be any danger of a

company town, the Provincial Government and Alcan took the deliberate step of having Kitimat incorporated before it was developed.

For the blue print of the future town, the Company engaged a leading authority on town planning in North America, Clarence S. Stein of New York. Mr. Stein was made co-ordinator and director of planning for Kitimat with Mayer, Whittlesey and Glass, architects and town planners, New York, charged with the general townsite planning.

In outlining his planning objectives to the Company, Mr. Stein stated, long before there was a town, "workers must find Kitimat more than temporarily acceptable. They must be enthusiastic about it as a particularly fine place in which to live and bring up their families. It must become the place they want as home — the town they are going to make their own."



In September, 1951, the team of experts, retained as consultants by the Company, went to work on a plan for Kitimat.

In order to judge climatic and topographical conditions they invaded the wilderness where the town now stands.

Realizing that family life would provide the core of the stable labor force desired for the industry, the planners designed Kitimat to meet the needs of young and growing families.

Basic principles of safety guided the decision to adopt a pattern of roads and walkways separating cars and people on foot; the layout of the area in industrial, commercial and residential neighborhoods provided for the growth of the town to keep pace with the increase in the size of the smelter.

The other important features were the location of the industrial area with respect to the prevailing winds, and the development of residential areas by

neighborhoods. The latter provides for practical and economic functioning of the town at any stage of its growth.

\* \* \* \*

Taking six BC towns varying in size from 10,000 to 15,000 people, as a basis for analysis, recommendations for Kitimat's municipal government were drawn up.

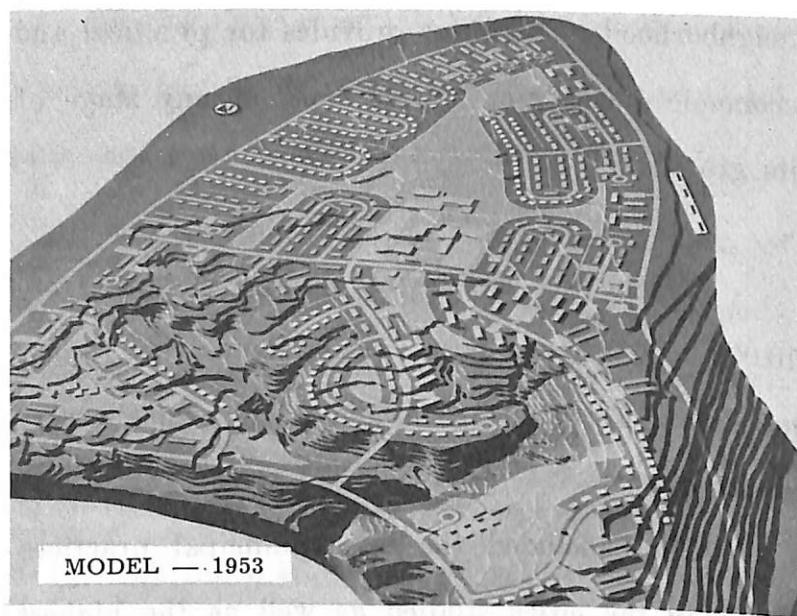
They included the best municipal practices found in the cities studied as well as the highest standards of efficient, modern municipal administration developed in Canada and the U.S.

The report formed what might be termed the operational part of a master plan as distinct from the physical blueprint for the layout of the area.

\* \* \* \*

Up to late 1952 all this was only on paper.

Using these reports as a master plan or guide, Alcan applied in the fall of '52 to the BC Legislature



for the incorporation of the area as a district municipality.

Because there was no chance of slow, gradual evolution of the district into a self-governing unit, special legislation was required.

Several months later, on March 31, 1953, the Legislature passed the Kitimat Incorporation Act and Letters Patent were issued making The Corporation of the District of Kitimat a reality.

In size it is an area of 66 square miles. It is the tenth largest district in British Columbia and is one and a half times larger than the city of Vancouver or the District of Burnaby, — nine times larger than Victoria.

It includes the townsite, the smelter, the main valley plain of the Kitimat River to four miles north on the Kitimat-Terrace highway, and the mountain sides adjacent to the townsite and the smelter.

At the time of incorporation Alcan had begun clearing for the first neighborhood, Nechako. Construction of roads, sewers, and watermains had been arranged for by the Company and some were already being built. Engineering for the bridge over the Kitimat River, connecting the future townsite with the beachhead at the smelter, was also under way.

The first residents, unmarried men and a few families, were housed in bunkhouses and single unit



dwellings built on land cleared beside the temporary dock.

\* \* \* \*

Up to this point Kitimat had been a private undertaking of the Aluminum Company of Canada.

Now a second force was introduced, — the people, — taking on the management of their own affairs, — voting, setting up executive and legislative forms, exercising municipal powers and detailing administrative responsibilities.

What has been the growth of this second force in five years?

How did they set up a form of self-government?

What has been the Municipality's progress up to now?

\* \* \* \*

## GROWTH

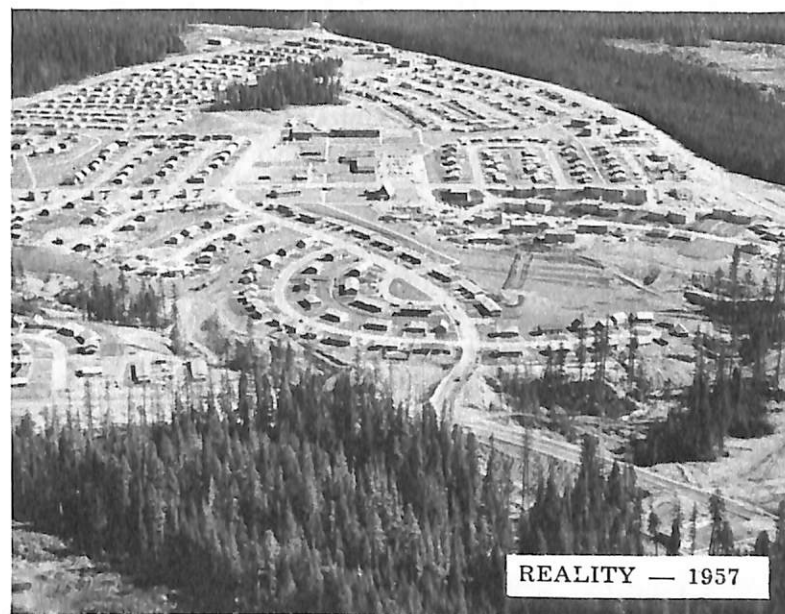
In terms of people, Kitimat's growth since those

early days has skyrocketed from a few hundred to 12,250 in April, 1958.

When the 1956 census was taken the town's population was recorded as 9,676.

In April, 1958, 1,540 names were on the voters' list.

This year babies are being born at an average rate of 42 per month.



The first school opened at the smeltersite in 1952 for 23 pupils. Peak enrolment in the winter of 1957-58 was 2,000.

\* \* \* \*

### SELF-GOVERNMENT

The first action of the newly-born, handsomely endowed municipality was to hold an election for a reeve and six councillors.

The Incorporation Act provided special qualifications for candidates and voters in order to allow maximum participation in the municipal election on April 30, 1953, and the first annual election on December 12 of the same year.

To implement the Act, the Aluminum Company, as sole owner of the land, legally transferred land to certain people to qualify them as candidates for office. Selection was made from among the Company's employees in Kitimat and from independent

businessmen who had arrived in the community.

The original voters' list was made up of 121 people who met the requirements of the Act as British subjects, over 21 years of age, and on the "claim" six months or more.

With the preliminaries out of the way, Kitimat voted.

Wilbur Sparks became Reeve by acclamation. Nine other men, nominal property owners, solemnly nominated each other for the six vacancies on the Council.

The 121 voters returned B. S. Baxter, E. G. Cronk, G. M. K. Davis, P. W. Hallman, G. T. Malby and Dr. P. G. Margetts as the first Council

The Municipality as a legal entity was born.

\* \* \* \*

The Council met regularly and faithfully. They labored, not for themselves, but for the tiny electorate, the nucleus of the town to be.



Some of the actions of the "six lonely men", — as they were once referred to, — were to adopt immediately a bylaw setting out the procedure of council meetings and establishing the Kitimat Municipal Code, — another bylaw to provide for the appointment of a municipal manager and to define his powers and duties, and a bylaw authorizing the borrowing of money to finance the infant town.

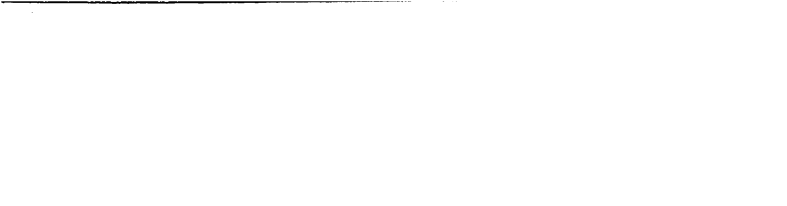
The first two alone are sufficient to mark Kitimat as a municipality well ahead in the field of local government.

The Municipal Code is a master bylaw made up of all general legislation adopted by the Council, indexed and cross referenced. It establishes a framework for additions and amendments as they arise. Kitimat is believed to be the first municipality in Canada or the United States to adopt such a code as its initial act.

At the time of Kitimat's birth only two other municipalities in British Columbia operated under the council-manager form of government recommended in the master plan and authorized by the Incorporation Act. The system is becoming more widely accepted and today there are five. It provides for a single, central official, i.e. the manager, to direct the administration of all public services. He is appointed by the Council and is responsible to it for the administration of the various functions of the Municipality.

In the complex task of organization and provision of municipal regulations and services, the Council was assisted from the beginning by Cyril McC. Henderson as consultant and adviser.

His appointment in late July, 1953, as Municipal Manager was the first step in the establishment of a permanent administrative staff for the District.







#### KITIMAT'S FIRST COUNCIL - 1953

*From left to right: Municipal Engineer D. P. I. Hawkins; COUNCILLORS B. S. Baxter, E. G. Cronk, P. G. Margetts; Municipal Manager C. McC. Henderson; REEVE W. H. Sparks; Deputy Clerk Miss Y. Mearns; COUNCILLORS G. T. Malby, G. M. K. Davis, P. W. Hallman; Treasurer L. W. Wheeldon.*

and Public Health are mentioned and there is reference to a beer license and a hotel.

A glance through the thin minute book of '53 reveals something of the variety of problems dealt with.

An offer by a private individual to take over garbage collection, — a lucrative undertaking in construction days, — was turned down briskly by the

Councillors who upheld the view that garbage collection was a municipal service and should be provided out of taxes.

A street naming committee, set up by the Council, performed one of the most unusual tasks connected with the early days of the town. Its final report, arrived at in collaboration with the Aluminum Company, is the basis of the original and still contro-

In February, '54, the money bylaws were passed with the exception of the bridge bylaw which was rejected on first presentation to the electorate but later accepted.

The contract with the RCMP went through.

Taxi, garbage and utility regulations were drafted, discussed and adopted.

Further money bylaws for the extensions of public services were considered, drafted and passed.

In March, 1954, a town planning commission was appointed to serve in an advisory capacity in planning the future physical development of the Municipality with the master plan as a guide.

A zoning bylaw was introduced in the spring of '54 to make provision for the natural growth of the town in a systematic and orderly way. It set up building and use districts and the most important

principles of the master plan are embodied in its regulations.

Like branches of a tree the municipal function spread out steadily, revealing more and more of the community's growth.

As development accelerated in early '54, minutes of Council meetings indicate more clearly the emerging shape of the administrative framework.

A legal branch was established and Richard Gosse was appointed solicitor to the Municipality in February, 1954.

A further step in organizing Public Safety was the appointment in July, '54, of Aubrey Creed as fire chief. At the same time arrangements were made for a temporary firehall, a tent for the department's first living quarters and purchase of the first fire fighting equipment.

Social Welfare became a reality with the first visit of the regional officer from Prince Rupert.

Responsibility for Public Health was assumed and Dr. Evelyn Fox was appointed medical health officer.

Public Works began to divide into defined channels. Sanitation included, at first, garbage collection, — later expanded to street cleaning and sewer maintenance. Road maintenance and snow clearing were taken over at the end of 1954.

Utilities faced a snowballing program of extensions to sewers and roads. Trunk watermains and sewers were constructed for many years ahead with actual servicing in subdivisions on a day to day basis. Planning for roads and utilities was being projected three years ahead of construction.

Kitimat that summer adopted the 1953 edition of the National Building Code, the first municipality to do so.

R. K. Jensen was appointed Building Inspector

## KINGFISHER AVENUE





to enforce building and zoning regulations in the new town under the Code.

\* \* \* \*

In the spring of '54, the people arrived.

They moved from the smeltersite, — came from the east, — from Vancouver, — to occupy the first 80 houses on the townsite.

All the theory, all the planning now faced its ultimate test, — people.

The houses were occupied before they were serviced and the first few families lived for several weeks without a water supply. A stop-gap system of spanking new garbage cans of water delivered by truck three times a week solved that difficulty.

Roads were not finished. There were no sidewalks.

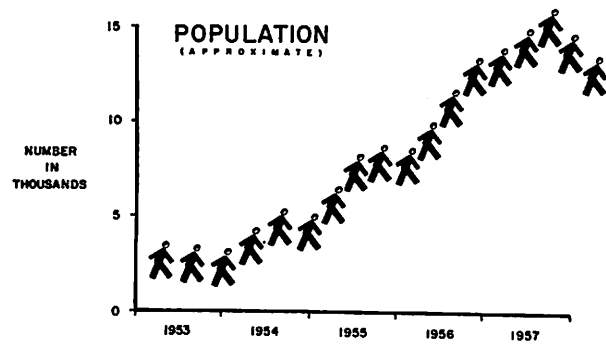
Mud, everywhere, — Kitimat mud, — torn earth, and construction clutter covered the townsite. But there was a population.

From this point on the Council dealt increasingly with masses of legislation regulating public services, ironing out problems which were natural corollaries of a mushrooming community, and providing for orderly and speedy correction of the most urgent situations.

With the start-up of potline 1 in July, 1954, the need for houses became critical. Sub-neighborhoods were being built on by the two major housing contractors and private builders at a speed sometimes ahead of the installation of services.

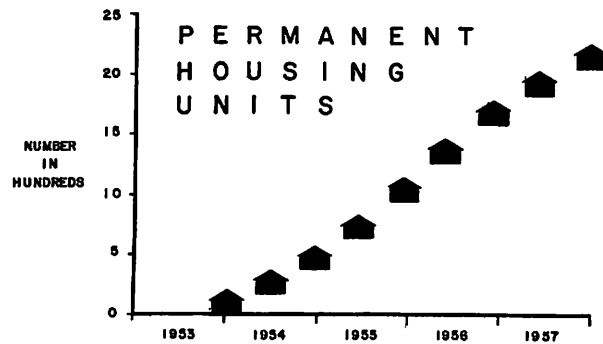
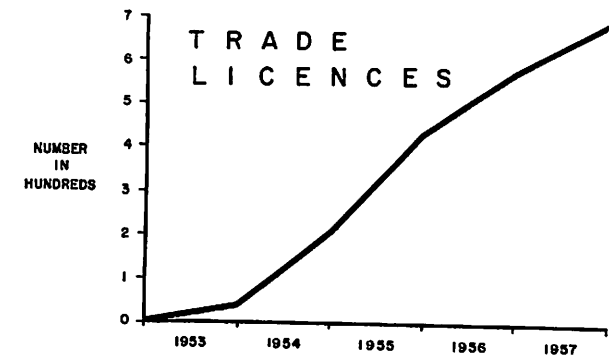
People had to be accommodated, needs had to be met, and a continuous stream of requests for special use permits, exceptions from Municipal regulations faced the Council at almost every meeting.

On November 1, 1954, the housing situation was referred to by Councillor P.W. Hallman, as "the most demoralizing and critical problem that faced the town."

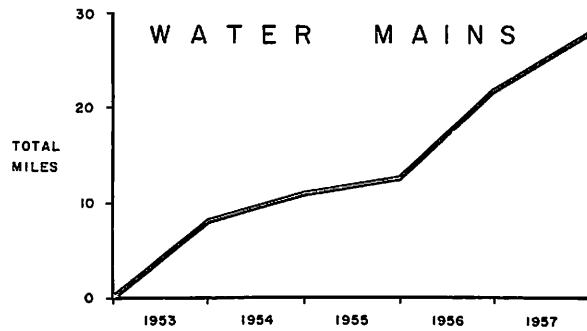


**THE POPULATION HAS GROWN RAPIDLY**

**BUSINESSES WERE ESTABLISHED TO SERVE THE PEOPLE**

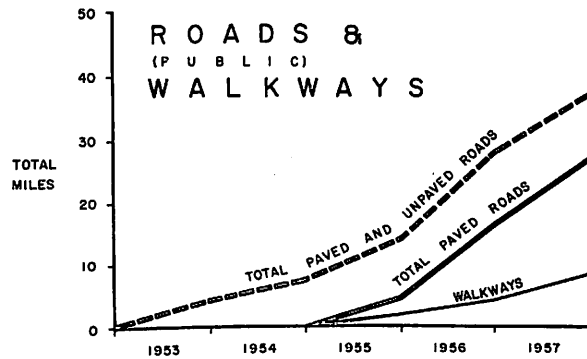
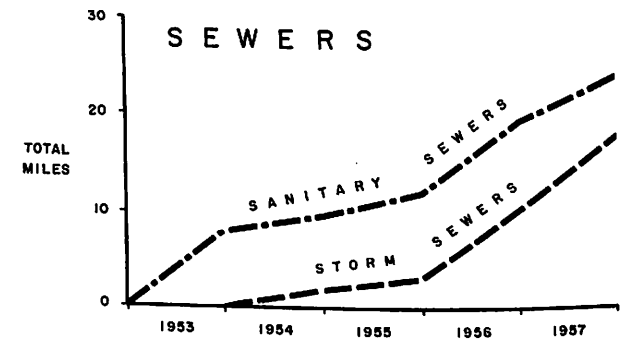


**HOMES WERE BUILT TO HOUSE THEM**



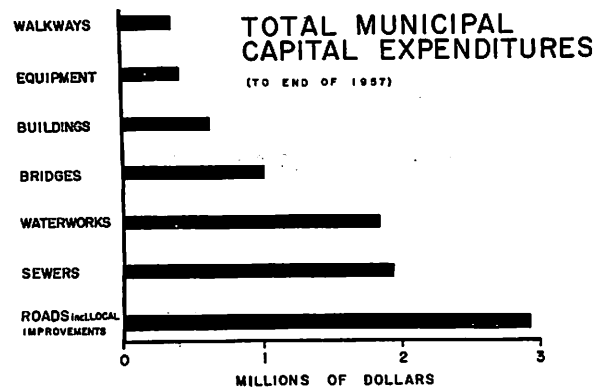
WATER MAINS AND SEWERS WERE INSTALLED TO

SERVICE HOMES AND PLACES OF BUSINESS



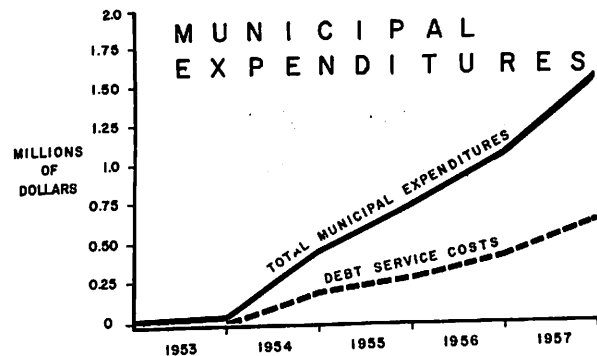
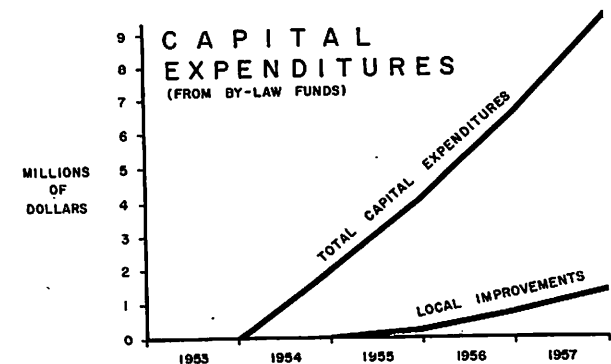
ROADS AND WALKWAYS WERE CONSTRUCTED FOR CARS AND PEOPLE ON FOOT



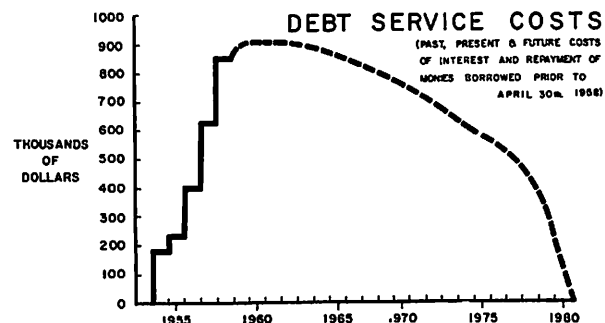


THESE IMPROVEMENTS COST MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

BORROWED FROM THOSE WHO HAD CONFIDENCE IN KITIMAT

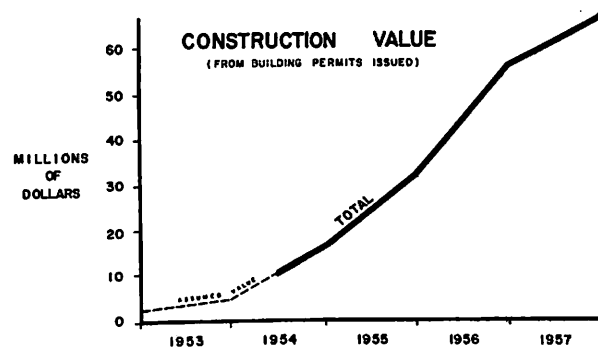
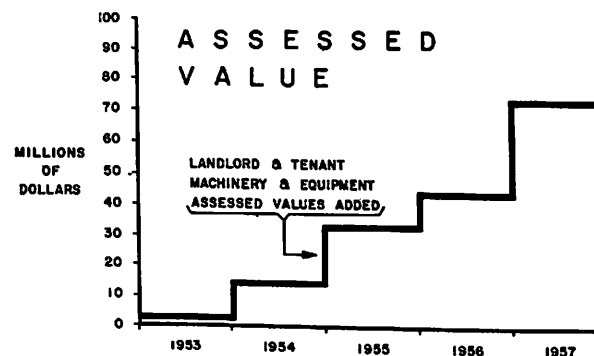


MUNICIPAL EXPENDITURES HAVE INCREASED OVER THE PAST YEARS AS HAS THE COST OF REPAYING OUR DEBT



**IT WILL BE MANY YEARS BEFORE THE EXISTING DEBT IS PAID OFF**

**ALL THIS HAS BEEN POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF THE TREMENDOUS  
ASSESSED VALUE OF PROPERTY WITHIN THE MUNICIPAL  
BOUNDARIES,**



**WHICH HAS RESULTED FROM THE MANY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS  
SPENT ON PRIVATE CONSTRUCTION IN KITIMAT DURING THE  
PAST FIVE YEARS.**

A community improvement association was organized about this time to push the demands of the residents. It was the forerunner of others.

High on the agenda at Council meetings in those days was the draft franchise between the Aluminium Company and the Municipality for the supply of electric power. It has yet to be resolved.

Refuse collection had to be reviewed. Charges for residents were eliminated and reduced for commercial and industrial premises.

Without ownership of the sewers, the usual sewer connection charge had to be waived until later. With more people, more taxi licenses were granted. A new system of billing for services was adopted.

Legislation was introduced expanding trades licensing to include the sale of beer in preparation for the hotel which was under construction in the Service Centre.

Local Improvement procedures were initiated in 1954 to provide for paving and curbs and gutters on streets in the first sub-neighborhood.

Plans for the Public Safety building were authorized and the first move was made toward establishing a public works yard.

A significant step taken by Council in November, 1954, was a bylaw providing for taxation of commercial and industrial landlord and tenant fixtures.

Termed by the Reeve as, "probably the most important move made by Council", the decision to adopt it was weighed carefully. On it rests the tax structure of the town and its borrowing power. Until Kitimat is firmly established with necessary services installed and operating soundly it must remain. At that time its implications increased the complexity of building a town in which the economy is based on industry.



While the Council and the administration dealt with these and dozens of other natural but swift moving developments, construction on the townsite progressed until in the late fall of '54 the first stores in the Nechako shopping centre opened for business.

It was a great day, — one of many to come.

Kitimat housewives were able to shop in a modern supermarket, stocked with many things they had not seen for a long time. The long, tiring trip by bus from the townsite to the Hudson's Bay Company store at the smeltersite became a thing of the past.

By Christmas of that year there was enough paved sidewalk in front of the shops to push a pram 100 yards.

Offices and stores took space in the building as it was completed. The school board used space on the ground floor for classrooms pending completion of the town's first permanent school.

And there was a Post Office.

By the end of '54 the Service Centre had become more than a widened clearing on a "tote" road.

Kitimat Builders Supplies, established in early '54, was the first independent business in the area. Sharing its roof that spring was the first branch of the Royal Bank of Canada in Kitimat. The hotel was under construction and there was feverish activity to complete the permanent home of the Kitimat Northern Sentinel.

Snaking through the bush to the north was the roadbed of the Canadian National Railway's branch line from Terrace. That summer it was possible to drive along the right-of-way. It was the first thrust outward, — the town's hand reaching through the wilderness to make contact with its neighbors in the north.

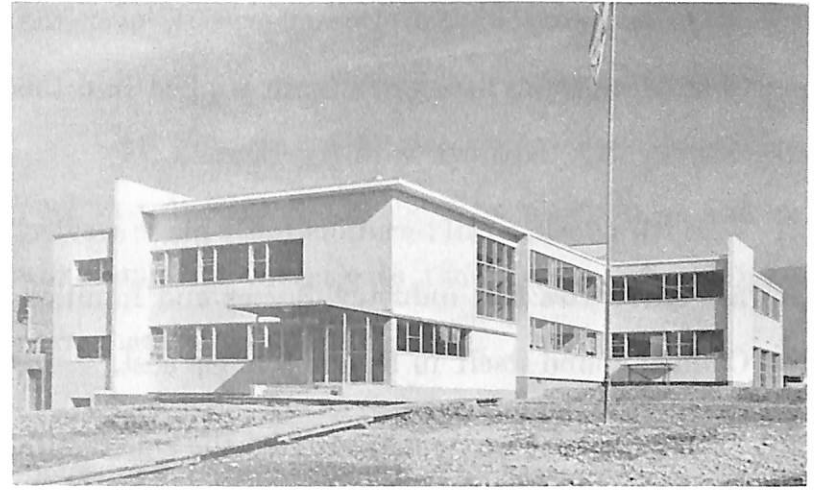








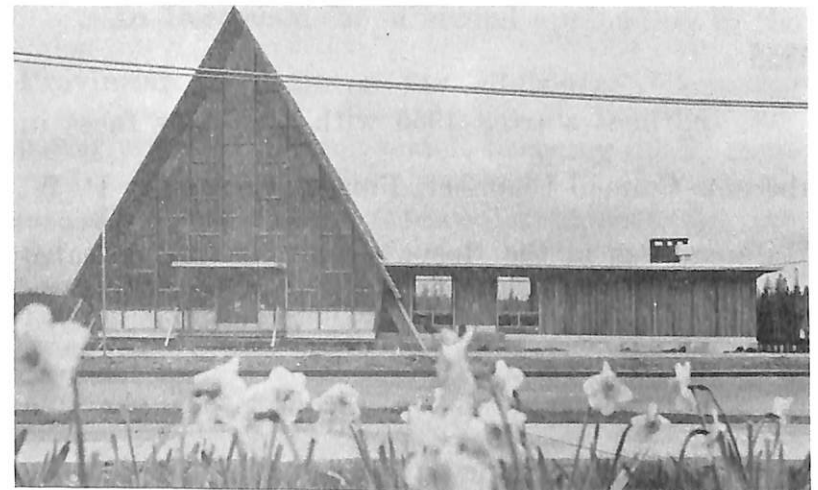
INAUGURAL TRAIN - 1955



PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING - 1956

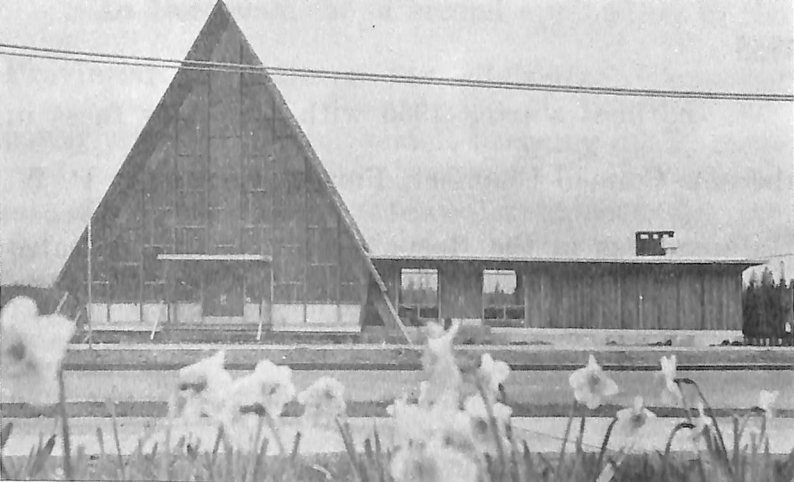


OPENING OF "THE BAY" - 1956



UNITED CHURCH - 1957





On a snowy day in December, '54, over the newly-laid rails, the first work train slipped into the clearing to link Kitimat with Terrace.

With a dock, a rail terminus, daily plane service, private enterprise and industry, homes and families, the Council found itself in business in earnest.

Late in the year it moved from the smeltersite to the Hullah Construction office on Haisla Boulevard which became its home for the next eighteen months.

\* \* \* \*

## 1955

Kitimat started 1955 with some new faces in the new Council Chamber. Former Councillor P. W. Hallman was in the Reeve's chair, having defeated Wilbur Sparks in the December '54, election.

Councillors Cohoon, Gooding, Hirtle and Kreller sat at the table with Councillors Baxter and Cronk, the only two remaining from the original six.

Taking the minutes as Clerk to the Council for the first time February 4, 1955, was the newly appointed Municipal Clerk, Mrs. Jo McElroy.

Immediate business in early 1955 was an application to the Provincial Government to increase the borrowing power of the Municipality.

In anticipation of the dedication of the main road from the Service Centre to the townsite traffic regulations were drafted early in the year.

The Public Safety Building was commenced and as the season progressed, authorization for the annex went through.

With the announcement in March, '55, of the step-up in smelter expansion, the Municipality pushed its plans to keep pace.

Construction reached a new high in the summer of 1955.

Crews worked double shifts and the hum of

machinery went on often throughout the brief, brilliant nights of the northern summer.

People worked for themselves after their shifts were over.

It was a common sight to see carlights focussed on some householder's yard at midnight while he and his neighbors poured a concrete walk or driveway.

The first tremendous lift to the community's morale came that year with the landscaping program of the Aluminum Company.

To hundreds of residents, the green of the first grass, the newly-planted trees were little short of miracles .

The first paving was another miracle. Children reached down and stroked it, then bounced off for wheel toys and balls to take advantage of what seemed to them, their own special property.

These things were stabilizing forces. They

marked the end of the construction camp era, the beginning of the town in a more permanent sense.

At Council meetings a municipal swimming pool was discussed, for the first time. A committee was named to investigate the best way to build a permanent municipal hospital.

The hotel in the Service Centre, with its enormous beer parlor, opened. The station building, as it stands today, was started late in the year.

Clearing in Kildala commenced.

In December, '55, a second application to the Provincial Government for additional borrowing power was made. Motor vehicle licensing finally came into effect and as roads were dedicated, snow clearing operations became a major responsibility of the Municipality.

\* \* \* \*

1956

On the heels of the progress made in '55, the



year of 1956 came in with a flourish, not only in construction but in population increase.

Families arrived by boat, by train and by air. Often with no place to go, they aimed for the second hand shop where they found bedding and other essentials to furnish rented rooms in the already constructed houses.

The influx that year included people from Portugal, Italy, Hungary, Greece, Germany and the Scandinavian countries, — many of whom have settled permanently, adding their national culture to the pattern of Kitimat's life.

A lot happened in the peak construction summer of 1956.

Houses went up fast in Kildala. In a six months building season, six hundred housing units were built in the area at the same time as roads and utilities.

Construction was well under way for the

Hudson's Bay Company's modern, three storey department store at the foot of Haisla hill. Super-Valu and the first Alcan building in the City Centre were started.

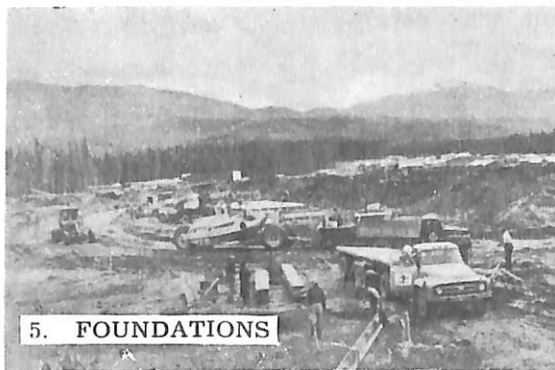
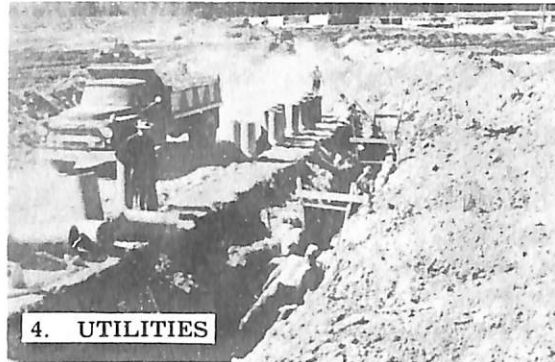
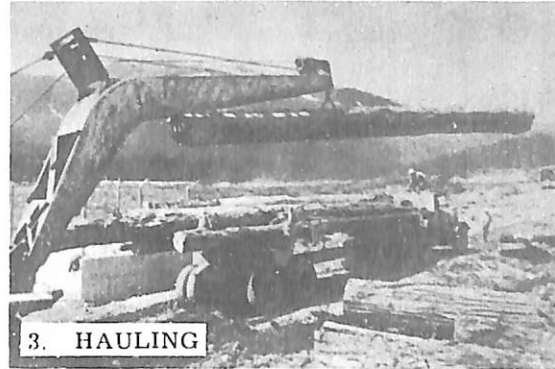
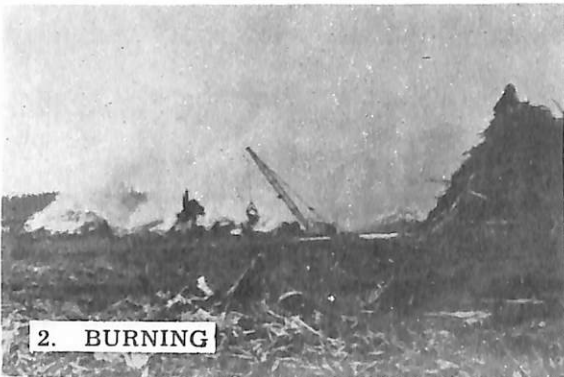
By this time the school building program had accounted for two completed elementary schools in Nechako, a start on the high school and on an elementary school in Kildala.

In July, '56, the Fire Department took over its quarters in the new Public Safety Building and was followed shortly by other municipal departments. Official opening of the building was Labor Day, 1956.

At the same time the library moved up in the world, from the old firehall to the newly vacated municipal offices on Haisla.

The Municipal cemetery was opened in late 1956.

## FROM FOREST TIMBER TO FINISHED TOWN



The first full Night School program was inaugurated in September, '56.

The first citizenship court, to accommodate the large number of residents seeking Canadian citizenship was held.

\* \* \* \*

As physical evidence of the town's growth spread, in the two years of '55 and '56, financial experience made possible more realistic budget estimates and the Municipality recorded progress in administrative routines. Better budgetary control of expenditure, better cost accounting procedures and records were now possible. A purchasing department was established and machine accounting introduced.

The Municipality took an interesting step at this time to meet an urgent need. It pioneered the use of existing legislation for the paving of off-street parking lots by the establishment of special benefit

areas for the assessment of capital costs. The result has been to set the pattern for future parking lot developments not only in Kitimat but in other BC municipalities.

\* \* \* \*

## 1957

On the impetus of the 1956 season the Municipality plunged into 1957 with an ever-increasing program of important "firsts".

To bring the town down to earth, the first undertaker was licensed, relieving the administration of one more burdensome task.

Bylaws for further road, sewer and watermain construction were passed by the ratepayers in February, '57, but the Community Centre bylaw, presented at the same time was rejected.

The "Y" opened that month and the Council authorized sketch plans for the building of a branch library in Nechako.

With the arrival of instruments, the Fire Department commenced a daily weather recording service.

The Hospital Society's board presented a brief to Council asking its support in negotiations with the Provincial Government. It was immediately given and from then on the board had the weight of the Municipality behind it in its dealings with the BCHIS.

The RCMP moved to the townsite in May of 1957 with a total strength of 15 men and three vehicles. At the same time the gaol wing of the Public Safety Building was completed and the Council Chamber fitted out as the Police Court where the magistrate administers justice.

The new high school was occupied early in the year but was not used for community functions until its completion that summer.

Slow down of construction was evident from

early in the season, due partly to the tight money policy of both provincial and federal governments and the reduction in expansion plans for the smelter.

However, trades licenses in July of 1957 reached a high of 208.

The landscaping of boulevards and the Public Safety Building grounds was started that summer and the annex to the building completed and occupied as the police barracks and overflow of municipal offices.

The first church had been completed and three others were under construction.

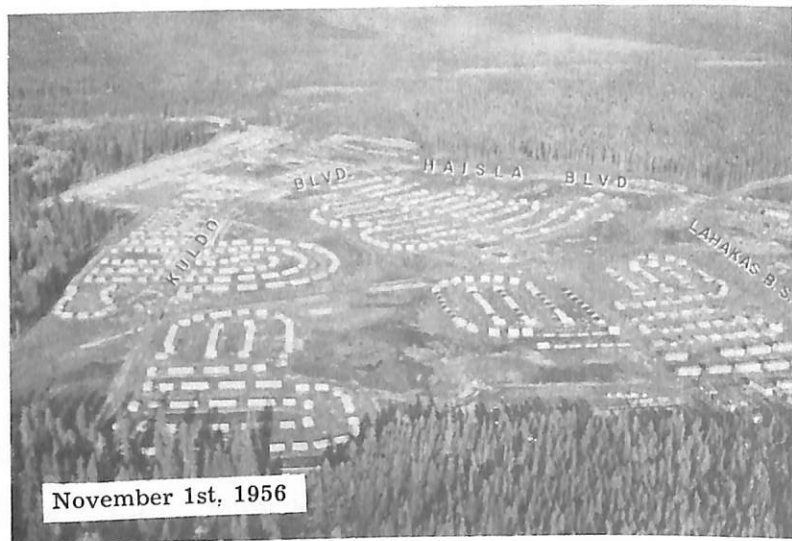
Work had commenced in 1956 on the Kitimat-Terrace highway.

The road, completed in the fall of 1957, gave Kitimat a sense of relationship with other communities of north central British Columbia. The town became a little more adult the day the colorful minister

## KILDALA NEIGHBORHOOD



## SIX-HUNDRED HOMES IN SIX MONTHS



of highways, Mr. Gaglardi, cut the ribbon at the Kitimat River bridge.

The bottled-up feeling had gone. People could get out and discover the hinterland.

\* \* \* \*

But the town's first real test of growing maturity, — its most sobering moment, — came a few weeks later when Saguenay-Kitimat Company announced suspension of its construction program.

Yet three weeks later, with solid confidence in the town and its future, 43.96 per cent of the town's eligible voters cast their ballots 95 per cent in favor of the \$2,280,000 hospital bylaw, the Municipality's share in the cost of building a \$3,500,000 hospital.

\* \* \* \*

A yardstick for the people's achievements and the Municipality's progress in the three main periods of the town's short life, — early '53 to late '54, — all



of '55, — and '56 through to October, '57, — could be made from a few questions based on the original concept of Kitimat.

They are grouped here.

Has Kitimat been built to meet the needs of young and growing families as it was planned?

Has its physical development provided the two basic principles of safety and allowance for future expansion?

Is it a town run by an elected council in the normal manner? Or is it, in spite of all that has been said, a company town?

Is its municipal administration efficient and up to date?

Kitimat is not the Utopia described in the glamor terms of the enthusiastic journalists of the early construction days.

It is a town with climate difficulties, communi-

cation difficulties, problems of remoteness, rapid expansion, sudden slow-up.

It is not complacent because it is too painfully aware of its shortcomings.

But it has had a consistent municipal aim of trying to estimate what the people want, what is most urgent and what, in the long run, will be best for the town.

How successfully this has been done is a matter of opinion.

Believing in the long range view of the master plan, the Municipality has pushed the completion of roads and services with increasing speed and efficiency each year.

The road paving program has moved quickly. The walkways have matched its pace.

The master plan has been followed with adaptations to developments as they have arisen: It has been interpreted as economically as possible so that

Kitimat would be served by a safe, efficient system of interior paths and peripheral roads capable of being maintained and serviced at a minimum cost.

The result is 3.34 miles of road per 1000 population as compared with 6.1 miles in an average BC town. This figure includes the roads in the two unbuilt sub-neighborhoods of B2 and B3. When these two areas are built up and occupied the ratio will be reduced to 2.58 miles of road per 1000 population. This compares with the 2.5 miles computed by the authors of the master plan.

Following the experience in the first neighborhood, Nechako, storm sewers have been regularly installed at the land developer's expense in succeeding subdivisions.

Municipal policy, after the intense drive to build the first two neighborhoods, is now directed toward installation of roads and services before house

construction is commenced. When construction starts again, the Municipality will be ahead of the game.

Park areas have been designated and await development at the speed public opinion demands.

A branch library, opened early this year, is providing on a volunteer basis, a library service unusual in a town of Kitimat's size.

The municipal hospital is taking shape and when completed promises to give the town an up-to-date, modern hospital and Public Health service unequalled in northern British Columbia.

Law enforcement, traffic control, fire protection, sanitation, snow removal and street maintenance, water and refuse collection, are supplied at an even, steady pace indicating an established, healthy routine in all these departments of municipal administration.

Finance and assessment are on a sound and efficient basis.

But a town cannot live on roads and water-works, sewers and taxes.

The Municipality's recognition of this led to the establishment of a recreation department which has guided and initiated many community activities since the fall of 1955. The community's use of its facilities is one straw in the wind indicating participation by the people in a phase of Kitimat's growth.

The ratepayers themselves turned down a by-law calling for the construction of a Community Centre to include an auditorium and workshop space. So the department operates without any physical plant designed to co-ordinate and consolidate its functions.

The master plan called for full use of schools for this purpose because of the tremendous public investment involved, and the schools have been used, not enough perhaps but special amenities and fac-

ilities can only come if the people themselves want them sufficiently.

\* \* \* \*

What has been done to attract and hold industrial workers?

Do people find Kitimat more than temporarily acceptable?

Are they enthusiastic about it?

How many feel it is the place they want as home? — the town, as Clarence Stein conceived it, "that they are going to make their own"?

Since October, 1957, the people of Kitimat, for the first time, have had a chance to ask such questions. Since then, many of them have taken the road out of town to look over the rest of northern BC.

Most of them have come back enthusiastic about Kitimat. They are developing a healthy pride in showing it to their neighbors.



They are discovering the mountains, lakes and streams of an unequalled recreation area. The sense of isolation has dwindled. Kitimat is learning that even its climate has compensations.

Parents are realizing that their children attend the finest schools in the province.

Everyone has an opportunity to have a garden and each year there are more.

For the first time the pattern of neighborhoods, walkways and greenbelts has begun to emerge vividly. And it is good.

It is functional and the people have accepted it.

\* \* \* \*

There is a man who came to Kitimat from central Europe five years ago.

He and his wife have been steadily employed



since that time. They own their own home which commands a view of the Douglas Channel, breathtaking in its wonder.

Their standard of living would be high in any North American city. They have improved their house in their own time by the work of their own hands. They drive a car. And they have made a fine garden.

What do they think of Kitimat?

“It is our home,” they say.

\* \* \* \*

They are typical of many people to whom Kitimat has become home in the past five years.

From different countries, with different racial backgrounds, all have two things in common, — their youth and their faith in what lies ahead.

Their confidence in Kitimat’s future, linked with the long-awaited opening of north central British Columbia, is strong and firm.

In five years they have seen the wilderness recede, watched a community emerge from a raw, unformed state, shared an adventure.

To them, it is the beginning.





1957